

MODULE

07

Facial Expressions

The face reflects the heart — and there
are 21 of them

WHAT THIS MODULE COVERS

If you use words that should carry an emotion and your face does not carry it too, people conclude you are a fraud. This module is about closing that gap.

The face tends to be an indicator of what is in the heart. Use emotion to move your facial expressions and you connect better — but people get this wrong constantly. Someone says "it's really great to be here today, it's such an honour" in a completely flat register. The audience hears the words and concludes the speaker did not mean them.

The research that changed how Steve thinks about this came from **Ohio State University in 2014**. The scientific community had agreed on six basic emotions visible in the human face: happiness, sadness, anger, surprise, fear and disgust. Ohio State fed billions of photographic images from every corner of the earth into a computer and asked it to identify consistent emotional expressions.

The computer confirmed the original six and found **fifteen more, for a total of 21** — most of them compound, like "happily surprised" or "sadly fearful." Then it delivered the finding that mattered most: **every human being on earth has all 21**. Not more in one region and fewer in another. All 21, everywhere.

That means emotion is a universal language. Steve gives speeches worldwide through interpreters and used to assume audiences would miss everything. They do not. If he shows indignation, every country knows what indignation is. Teaching in Brazil for ten years, the same two interpreters translated his sessions — and they translated his *emotions* as well as his words, delivering indignant lines indignantly.

21

emotions in every human face

6

the original agreed-upon set

15

more the research uncovered

100%

of humans have all 21

KEY CONCEPTS

Emotion as universal language

Because all 21 expressions are shared by every human being everywhere, emotion crosses language barriers in a way words never will.

The fraud test

If you use words that should elicit an emotion, you had better carry that emotion on your face — or people will decide you do not mean it.

Compound emotions

Most of the fifteen additional expressions combine two of the basic six. This is why emotional range is far wider than most speakers ever use.

FROM THE VIDEO

Ann Richards on oil and gas drilling

The governor of Texas was asked to do a television interview on continued oil drilling — politically dangerous in Texas. Her staff told her not to do it. She insisted, with one condition: a tight camera angle. She later told Steve why. "I wanted my eyes to play a role. I wanted people to see the passion in my eyes."

She slowed her pace down and down. She let her emotions shift — warmth about Austin first, ingratiating herself, then gravity. She enunciated deliberately: "the land and the water and the air ... is fundamental ... to life." Then she held eye contact with the reporter for six full seconds, essentially daring him to say she was wrong.

When Steve's team tested it, people who disliked her politics and disliked her personally still said: I get it, she is looking out for her grandkids. She was believable.

REMEMBER

— Say a warm line warmly or do not say it at all.

- Emotion travels across every language barrier. Words do not.
- You have 21 expressions available. Most speakers use two.
- Watching television will never be the same — start stealing what works.

PRACTICE

Exercises

Type directly into the shaded boxes below and save the file. Come back to your answers after you have practised — this is your record of what changed.

EXERCISE 1

Run all 21

Take one line and deliver it with every emotion you can produce, filming each take. Start with the six basics, then push into the compounds.

Write your line here. Steve uses: "21% of children in America go hungry, and it makes me angry."

Which emotions came out comfortably and looked right on playback?

Which ones did not work for you at all?

Try the hard one: deliver it with sarcasm masquerading as happiness. What happened?

EXERCISE 2**The honesty check**

Find a moment in your baseline recording where your words carried an emotion.

What was the line, and what emotion should it have carried?

Watch your face on that line with the sound off. Did the emotion show?

EXERCISE 3**Start watching differently**

From now on, watch every speaker on television as a student of this method.

Watch one speech or interview this week. What did they do with their face that you want to steal?

What did they do that you now recognise as a mistake?

BEFORE YOU MOVE ON

One thing from this module I will use the next time I speak:

When and where I will use it: